



## Davidson's Enduring Purpose for a Dynamic World: Strategic Priorities and Proposals

Davidson College's [purpose](#) is unmistakably and unshakably clear: to educate students for lives of leadership and service. In a turbulent moment in higher education and wider society, we celebrate our fundamental strengths as a top liberal arts college, and we commit to delivering the distinctive Davidson experience in our time and, through strategic work, for future generations.

Davidson can and must strategically employ our strengths to continue to serve our mission. During a year-long process, a steering committee and four Strategic Planning Working Groups selected across all constituencies explored and helped shape the strategic priorities and proposals that have emerged. As described below, these support our purpose and enable us to adapt to future demands.

### Priorities

1. Enhance our academic resources and curriculum, recruit and support faculty in academic areas of need, and build a library for the future.
2. Reinforce our strengths in identifying, enrolling, and supporting students who can thrive at Davidson, regardless of their circumstances.
3. Build a four-year advising and learning-for-life program that guides students in exploration and self-reflection, assisting them to develop intellectually, personally, and professionally.
4. Deepen and expand our work in institutional history; education and reconciliation; and justice, equality, and community.
5. Build out curricular and cocurricular work in the areas of ethical leadership and public good.
6. Strengthen our relationships in the Town of Davidson and across the Charlotte region.

### **Enhance our academic resources and curriculum, recruit and support faculty in academic areas of need, and build a library for the future.**

Following a wave of faculty retirements, recent faculty cohorts are more diverse in terms of fields and demographic backgrounds, and we have increased the number of majors and minors. We must continue to recruit innovative scholars and ensure that all academic facilities meet current and future needs.

### Proposals:

- Explore opportunities to make the curriculum and daily schedule more flexible.
- Support ongoing curricular reform.
- Expand support for faculty and student scholarship and creative work.

- Promote teaching excellence through the John Crosland Jr. Center for Teaching and Learning.
- Build out human and technological infrastructure for digital and visual studies.
- Transform the library into the multi-disciplinary center of Davidson' intellectual life.

**Reinforce our strengths in identifying, enrolling, and supporting students who can thrive at Davidson, regardless of their circumstances.**

We must promote and extend the extraordinary opportunity to learn and grow at Davidson to those who can benefit most from it, regardless of their circumstances.

Proposals and existing initiatives:

- Maintain need-blind admission and meet demonstrated financial need without packaging loans.
- Decrease the share of financial aid allocated from the college's operating budget through endowments and new scholarships.
- Intensify the work of Admission to reach low-income and first-generation students.
- Recruit scholar-athletes and scholar-artists from all backgrounds.
- Expand our efforts to increase Davidson's visibility and encourage alumni assistance.

**Build a four-year advising and learning-for-life program that guides students through exploration and self-reflection, assisting them to develop intellectually, personally, and professionally.**

We must make it easier for students to discover and select from the many options available to them and enhance the ways we teach our students to reflect on experiences and seek intellectual and career pathways that appeal to their strengths and goals.

Proposals:

- Redesign the advising system to ensure that all students receive high-quality advising, develop a mentor network, and identify their individual abilities and capacities.
- Implement a learning-for-life program that provides information about available resources and regular exposure to the skills students need.
- Centralize resources to support high-impact experiential learning alongside academic course of study.
- Create new alumni/ae volunteer roles in connecting students with the Davidson network.
- Explore requiring a First-Year Seminar that reflects on the world's most pressing problems from multiple perspectives and ways of knowing.

High-impact experiences such as research, study abroad and away, fieldwork, artistic productions, travel, internships, and community-engaged learning have significant educational benefits for all students, especially those from underserved and

underrepresented backgrounds. We must ensure that every student can take advantage of at least one such experience and weave critical reflection into each one.

Proposals:

- Guarantee and make accessible a high-impact experience for every student.
- Use all resources to encourage every student to take advantage of this guarantee.
- Streamline and centralize the resources and advising for high-impact experiences and ensure that these experiences have a reflective component.
- Strengthen existing high-impact experiences to ensure their quality and accessibility.
- Build new opportunities for curricular and/or extracurricular experiential learning.

### **Deepen and expand our work in institutional history; education and reconciliation; and justice, equality, and community.**

Although Davidson's ideals have centrally included freedom and equality, we recognize that many of its early leaders profited from the enslavement of human beings, and the college itself profited from the work of enslaved people. For more than a century after the end of slavery in the US, the college was complicit with structures that maintained racial segregation, exploitation, and injustice. We will expand and deepen the work of the [Commission on Race and Slavery](#).

Proposals and existing initiatives:

- Develop Beaver Dam plantation, homestead of the Davidson family, as a site for the study of institutional and local history and descendant outreach.
- Expand our engagement with descendants of people enslaved by those attached to the college, alongside ongoing exploration of the college's history and efforts to promote racial justice.
- Continue outreach to and collaboration with communities harmed by the legacies of slavery and racism and expand additional education and racial reconciliation work.
- Support Dúta Bāhiisere Kus Rá?here: We Know Corn Together, our multi-faceted educational collaboration with the Catawba Nation.
- Deepen our commitment to justice, equality, and community across the curriculum.

### **Build out curricular and cocurricular work in the areas of ethical leadership and public good.**

Davidson's mission is to assist students in developing humane instincts and disciplined and creative minds for lives of leadership and service.

Key Proposal:

- Establish an Institute for Public Good, which will help our students and employees become effective, ethical leaders and citizens by creating initiatives to support this goal, with emphasis on ethics and integrity, sustainability, social capital, and racial education and reconciliation.

Additional Proposals:

- Establish an incubator for work in Arts and Public Good.
- Explore curricular options in Ethics and Social Change and Policy Studies.
- Expand research commitments to specific social problems.

### **Strengthen our relationships in the Town of Davidson and across the Charlotte region.**

Our location is a remarkable and mutually beneficial asset for Davidson and the greater Charlotte region. We aim for Davidson to have even stronger leadership role in the region, to be viewed as a natural partner for academic initiatives in Charlotte, and to attract many applicants from Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools.

Proposals:

- Enhance student access to opportunities in the greater Charlotte region, build our relationships with key businesses and organizations that hire our graduates, and provide students with related career services.
- Pursue strategic collaborations with other educational institutions located in Charlotte or which have satellite campuses there to work toward an Academic Neighborhood in Charlotte through which we could share resources and work together to solve entrenched problems facing our communities.
- Identify a physical space in Charlotte where Davidsonians can engage with the city and have reliable and accessible transportation to and from the location. We envision a multi-faceted space promoting a living-and-learning community aligned with our commitment to innovative solutions to community issues.
- Bring more of our neighbors to campus through outreach in programming, research, and events.

### **Next Steps, Implementation, and Evaluation of Outcomes**

As we refine and build consensus around these priorities and proposals, we will also frame implementation plans for each. Some have already been implemented or will be realized in the 2024-25 academic year. For many proposals President Hicks and senior leaders will form a team of stakeholders to plan next steps. This may require a focus on feasibility and developing an implementation plan. Teams will include faculty and relevant administrative offices and units as well as students, alumni, trustees, and friends of the college. This process will begin immediately.

We are grateful for the significant, constructive and creative input of many people across the college community in moving this planning process forward and helping Davidson to realize its purpose into the future.